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JFK's Death Questioned; Coroner Refutes Findings

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"Hard physical evidence leads to the conclusion that the actions of two human beings led to the shooting of President John F. Kennedy 11 years ago today," said Dr. Cyril H. Wecht, former president of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences and the American Academy of Legal Medicine.

Wecht, speaking on "The JFK Assassination," was appearing in the second of a series of lectures sponsored by GW's Department of Forensic Sciences.

He based his findings on evidence compiled in the Warren Report, the official government inquiry into the assassination of Kennedy; the "Zapruder Film," the best documented film of the assassination;

and personal experiments in which he tried to recreate, in accordance with known evidence, the firing time and trajectory of the assassin's bullet and replicas of the fired bullet.

Wecht claims that the famous "single-bullet theory," which was used by investigators to explain the relationship between the trajectory of the assassin's bullet and the point at which it entered Kennedy's body, is "scientific, unadulterated nonsense."

Wecht, presently Allegheny County Coroner in Pittsburgh and director of the Institute of Forensic Sciences at Duquesne University in Pennsylvania, went on to refute the theory on three accounts.

The Warren Commission reported, said Wecht, that the metal fragments found in Kennedy's body would have to have come from one bullet. Yet Wecht contends that the weight of the bullet and the weight of the metal fragments do not coincide. He stated that the actual evidence shows that the weight of the fragments was really more than that of the fired bullet.

Another one of Wecht's doubts over the validity of the "single-bullet theory" concerns John Connally, then governor of Texas, who was riding in the front seat of the same

car as Kennedy. Connally was also struck by a bullet.

"The bullet shattered three to four inches of the Governor's fifth right rib," said Wecht. "However, two-thirds of the 'actual' bullet, the one shown to the Warren Commission, was without marking or deformity."

To make his point, Wecht then showed slides comparing the assassin's bullet with those of the same type that he and a colleague had shot into the wrists of cadavers. Wecht's bullets were almost entirely crushed as compared with the rigidity of the assassin's bullet.

In addition, Wecht pointed out that the Warren Commission concluded the same bullet which had first struck Connally behind the right armpit had then proceeded and hit Kennedy in his neck.

"I'm not exaggerating. It's all there," exclaimed Wecht as he showed that in order for the bullet to have entered Connally's body and then Kennedy's as it did, it would have had to make right angles in mid air. He supported his assertion by using diagrams showing the alleged trajectory of the bullet.

Wecht claimed to have found many other discrepancies between the actual evidence and the conclu-

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sions made by the commission. Wecht said that when the murder weapon, an old World War II type gun, was found, experts tested it and determined that it would take at least 2.3 seconds for someone to load, position and aim the gun between shots. Yet documented film of the assassination, when showed frame by frame in slow motion, shows that the time between the shots allegedly fired by Oswald was less than 2.3 seconds.

Wecht also questioned the efficiency of the government investigation in general. He said too many people ignore the fact that Kennedy's dead body was never exam-

ined by a competent forensic pathologist.

"Two of the three doctors present at the autopsy had no training in forensic pathology," Wecht stated. He added that Pierre Fink, a forensic pathologist whose capabilities he termed "questionable" and the third doctor to examine the body, had later stated he was stopped by an army general from dissecting the wounds in Kennedy's neck and back.

In addition, Wecht has second thoughts as to what the real verdict of Oswald's trial would have been since, after three days of questioning before he was murdered by Jack Ruby, "there was no recording of any substantial length of what the murder suspect had to say."